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RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
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DEPARTMENT FOR AF DAS YAMAMOTO, AF/E, AND CA/OCS/ACS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/12/2016

TAGS: [MOPS](#) [CASC](#) [PREL](#) [ET](#) [KN](#)

SUBJECT: ETHIOPIA: GOVERNMENT LAUNCHES MILITARY OFFENSIVE
AGAINST ONLF

Classified By: Charge Vicki Huddleston for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (S/NF) SUMMARY. Two senior Ethiopian General officers told DATT May 9 and May 11 that Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF) have begun an offensive aimed at neutralizing Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) in the Somali region. The Ministry of National Defense advised that Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) civil affairs teams should restrict their movement to the towns of Gode and Kebri Dehar. END SUMMARY.

12. (S/NF) LTG Samora did not reveal what triggered the operation, CJTF-HOA Commander Rear Admiral Richard Hunt and embassy RSO offered two possibilities in a May 10 meeting. However, ENDF Head of Operations Main Department said this is part of the larger ENDF effort to crush the various insurgencies in Ethiopia. Hunt told Ambassador Huddleston that he had received reports of abnormal ONLF troop buildup and increased movement of weapons from Eritrea to the Ogaden region. According to Admiral Hunt, this may have contributed, at least in part, to the ENDF's increased military posture in the region. Embassy RSO noted that China and possibly Malaysia were expected to commence drilling for natural gas shortly, and that the ENDF may be increasing its presence in Ogaden to protect the companies' assets and personnel against ONLF attacks. (Note: ONLF issued a statement April 24 warning foreign firms not to work in the region and announced that the armed conflict between the ENDF and ONLF forces created an unsafe environment for any exploration to occur. End Note.) The ENDF conducts continuous counter insurgency operations against the ONLF in the Somali region.

13. (C) The CJTF-HOA civil affairs teams have not deployed out of CJTF-HOA in Djibouti and the other team located in Gode will not move outside the town. Embassy has convened an emergency action committee meeting to assess the impact of increased military activity in the Ogaden region and, as a result, all Americans will be advised to avoid travel in the zone where the operations are taking place. A travel warning for this zone will be issued May 12.
HUDDLESTON